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Sun debuts UltraSPARC III and embraces copper
By: Andrew Orlowski in San Francisco
Posted: 26/09/2000 at 19:23 GMT

Contrary to weekend reports, Sun Microsystems will preview one server and one workstation featuring its spanking new UltraSPARC III processors tomorrow.

John Shoemaker, executive veep of the system products group at Sun reiterated that UltraSPARC III systems will roll out gradually over the next nine to twelve months. Rivals HP and IBM have made much of delays to USIII, and it has to be said that you could be forgiven for expecting a gigantic server roll out tomorrow. And we've noted the mischievous timing of the UltraSPARC III "launch" (actually, it was the launch of press release announcing the launch of the UltraSPARC III) on September 11, the day before HP unveiled its Superdome high-end servers.

Tomorrow will see the real launch, honest, says Sun. And what we'll actually get will be a new workstation, SunBlade 1000 featuring a 750Mhz UltraSPARC III processor, and a new rackmount server the SunFire 280R, a replacement for the 220R rackmount. The 280R will be 4U size uni and two way rack, and will come with revamped technical compute load balancing software that will enable parallel jobs to use the workstations at off-peak hours.

"Serengeti is only a code name for a portion of the UltraSPARC III family," Shoemaker tell us, "we're starting as we always do with the workstations and low-end servers and by end of Fiscal Year all the rest will be on the market."

Anant Agrawal, Sun's general manager of processor development tell us that the next reiteration of UltraSPARC III at 900Mhz will be the first to use copper insulators. He says Sun made the decision with TI three years ago to use low-K dielectric techniques that employ special polymers that reduce wiring capacitance, making for cooler lower voltage chips. The copper techniques reduce resistance.

Although Sun hasn't made quite such a song and dance about it, he points out that both IBM and Sun will be using copper and low-K

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techniques shortly.

We don't expect to see the debut of Sun's new crossbar switch tomorrow but the new SSM (Shared Scalable Memory) architecture that marks a break from Sun's SMP-only model into a NUMA territory will form the basis of its UltraSPARC III-based replacements for its high-end E10000.

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